

## THE BUNNY STORIES.\*

FOR LITTLE READERS.

### DEACON BUNNY BUYS A MULE.

DEACON BUNNY came home from a county fair, one day, leading a pony mule.

He was a small, dun-colored, peaceful-looking creature, of uncertain age, and seemed to be very docile and gentle.

The Bunnies were surprised and delighted, for they had never seen so cunning a little steed, and they had often teased their father to buy them a pony and village-cart for their own.

The Deacon did not tell the family all the reasons why he had bought the mule, but said the animal might do for the children to drive, and would be useful for light work about the place.

The Bunnies very nearly quarreled about the name and the ownership of the mule, but at last agreed to call him "Donkey Dan," and to own him in common.

Cousin Jack looked him over carefully, and as he did not say much in his praise, the Deacon asked what was the matter with the mule.

Cousin Jack replied that he might be a good-enough mule, what there was of him, but Cousin Jack was afraid he was not so amiable as he looked.

He told the Deacon he had seen very disagreeable kinds of mulishness hiding behind just such an outward show of meekness, and, though he might be mistaken, and hoped he was, the family likeness to vicious mules was very strong in Donkey Dan, especially about the eyes.

The Deacon said the man who sold him the mule told him that the mule had been a great pet in the family where he was raised, and was a perfect cosset.

"That is just what I was afraid of," said Cousin Jack, "and if the mule has any chronic faults, his bringing up is probably more than half to blame for them; however, we will wait and see."

The next day the Deacon bought a village-cart and harness, and the children took their first ride behind Donkey Dan, with Bunnyboy as a driver.

They had a jolly trip, and came home full of praise of Donkey Dan and the way he had behaved.

The Deacon joked Cousin Jack about having misjudged the mule, and he replied, that he was sorry if he had done the poor fellow any injustice, for, as a rule, he tried to think kindly of the

meanest of God's creatures, instead of judging them hastily or harshly.

All went smoothly for several days, until one morning Gaffer, the farmer who worked for Deacon Bunny, was told to take Donkey Dan and the cart and carry a bag of potatoes to the Widow Bear.

The potatoes were in the barn, and Gaffer tried to make the mule back the cart up to the barn-door, in order to load them easily, but Donkey Dan would n't "back!"

The harder Gaffer pulled on the reins, the more firmly the mule braced the other way, and the stubborn animal turned his head from side to side in a most provoking manner.

Then Gaffer tried to lead him about and bring the cart near the door, but this plan also failed.

Donkey Dan was stubborn and seemed to have made up his mind to have his own way, and to do just contrary to what he was asked to do.

The barn stood on a hillside, and the roadway had been built up on the lower side to make it level and was supported by a stone wall. A light wooden railing protected the embankment, which rose eight or ten feet above the yard.

When Gaffer was trying to make him back, Donkey Dan was facing the bank. When he tried to lead him toward the barn the mule was, of course, facing the other way.

Gaffer chirruped and coaxed, and tried to pull him forward, but still the mule braced his feet and would not budge.

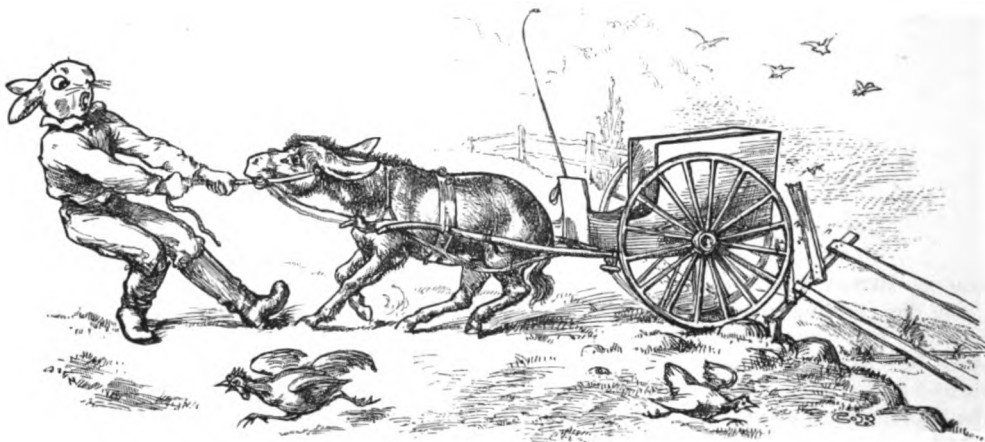
Suddenly, and without any warning or reason, Donkey Dan began to "back" with a great rush, and before Gaffer could hinder him, the wheels crashed through the frail fence, and down the bank went the cart and donkey, backwards, both landing wrong side up in a heap below.

Gaffer was frightened and called for help, while the mule, stunned and probably too much surprised to move, lay there until the Deacon and Gaffer went to his aid.

Strange to say, Donkey Dan seemed to be unhurt, and when once more on his feet, he shook himself and began to nibble the grass as if nothing had happened.

The cart, which was badly broken, was sent to

\*Copyright, 1888, by John H. Jewett. All rights reserved.



GAFFER TRIES TO BRING DONKEY DAN TO THE BARN-DOOR.

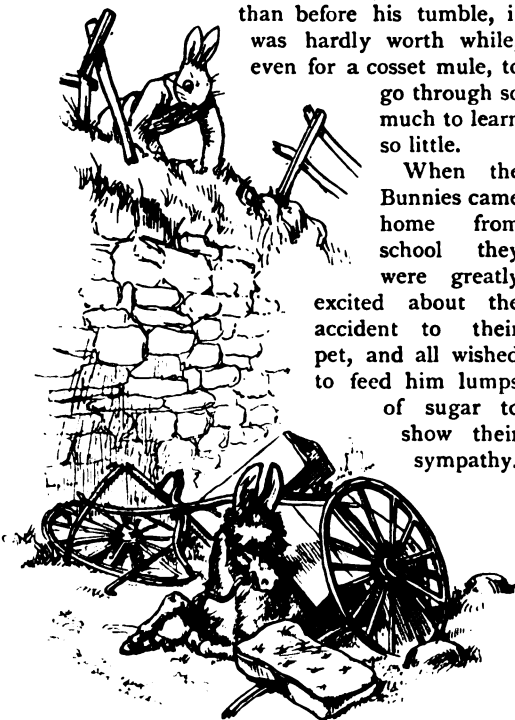
the shop to be repaired, and Gaffer took one of the farm-horses to do his errand.

Deacon Bunny said some persons would call it a miracle that Donkey Dan was not killed by his tumble, and he hoped it would be a lesson to him.

Cousin Jack suggested that a good way to prevent the same kind of "miracle" from happening again, would be to build a stronger and more suitable railing on top of the wall, and that though

Donkey Dan might know more than before his tumble, it was hardly worth while, even for a cosset mule, to go through so much to learn so little.

When the Bunnies came home from school they were greatly excited about the accident to their pet, and all wished to feed him lumps of sugar to show their sympathy.



DONKEY DAN COMES TO GRIEF.

Brownly declared that Gaffer must have abused Dan, or he would not have acted so badly.

The Deacon told him it was useless to try to explain why a mule was mulish, by blaming other folks, and that talking about it would not mend the cart nor the mule's manners.

Cousin Jack said the resignation of that mule as he lay there on the ground, and his self-satisfied expression when he had been helped out of the scrape, seemed almost Bunny-like.

Mother Bunny said she was glad and thankful none of the children were in the cart at the time, and that she should feel uneasy about them in the future if they went to ride with the mule.

Cousin Jack remarked quietly to her, that he was sorry *one* of the Bunnies had not seen the whole performance, for an object lesson in willfulness and heedlessness might perhaps make it easier for her to restrain one of her troublesome comforts.

He did not say which one of the Bunnies, but Mother Bunny knew which one he meant, and you also may find out by reading the next chapter.

#### DONKEY DAN AND BROWNLY.

COUSIN JACK, who was very fond of all babies, used to say that the only things a baby did n't out-grow were a mother's love and patience, and it was almost a pity that they had to grow up at all.

Brownly was now seven years old, two years older than Cuddledown, the youngest, and he had been the pet of the family even after she had come to divide the honors.

All through his babyhood, until after he was able to go alone, he had been what is called a delicate child, never quite so rugged and vigorous as the others at the same ages.

For this reason he was more tenderly cared for and looked after, too often humored when he should

have been pleasantly denied, and left to do hardly anything for himself.

In this way he acquired the habit of being waited upon, and of having other people use their eyes and ears and brains for him, instead of learning to use his own.

When he had become old enough to play out in the fresh air and sunshine with the other children, without being tied to a nursemaid's apron-string, he had a hard time in getting used to the sharp corners of the doorsteps, the rough edges of curbstones, and the gritty side of a brick or gravel walk, because it was so easy for him to fall over anything that happened to be in his way, instead of using his eyes, or stopping to think for himself when in a hurry.

This change from a "hug-able," sweet-tempered, and comfortable little bundle of helplessness, to a heedless, self-willed, and unlucky youngster, was a great trial to the family, especially to his mother.

Not that Brownny was altogether a bad or stupid child, for he had a tender heart, and was kind and generous in many ways, but his willfulness and blundering brought more trouble upon himself and others than there was any need for having, where every one else was kind and thoughtful and tried to teach him to be careful.

After Donkey Dan's tumble down the bank, whenever the Bunnies went to ride, Bunnyboy, who was eleven years old and strong for his age, was sent with them as driver.

This did not suit Brownny, for he thought he was old enough to drive, himself. He kept on saying that Donkey Dan was all right, and that Gaffer was to blame for the accident at the barn.

Bunnyboy had been cautioned, when driving, to keep in the broad high-ways, to avoid narrow lanes and steep places, and and not to make the mule back.

As no accident happened, Brownny became more and more confident, and one Saturday afternoon, without asking leave, he harnessed the mule and drove out alone.

No one saw him start, as Mother Bunny was busy indoors, and the other Bunnies were away at play.

In driving through the village, Brownny met his sister Pinkeyes and asked her to ride home.

Instead of keeping on the highway, he turned into a by-road; and though Pinkeyes told him he ought not to go that way, he said he knew what he was about, and kept on. In spite of the fact that Pinkeyes was two years older, she had been in the habit of yielding to Brownny; and to avoid a quarrel she said no more.

This by-road soon separated into two lanes, both leading toward home—one running over a hill, and the other around it.

Brownny wished to go over the hill, but Donkey Dan tried to take the other and easier road.

The harder Brownny pulled him to the right, the more the mule tried to go to the left, until Brownny, becoming impatient with the mule, lost his temper and struck Dan smartly with the whip, at the same time giving a strong jerk on the right rein.

Donkey Dan made one plunge forward and then stopped short, turned his head from side to side, and refused to go either way.

Another blow with the whip, and another jerk on the reins, and in a twinkling the mule whirled short about, upsetting the cart and throwing the



BROWNNY AND DONKEY DAN DISAGREE AS TO WHICH ROAD IS THE RIGHT ONE.

children topsy-turvy into the gutter among the brambles and stones.

Donkey Dan then dashed down the road, but Brownny hung to the reins and was dragged quite a distance, until Neighbor Fox saw the runaway coming, and stopped the mule.

Brownny asked Neighbor Fox to go back with him and help his sister, for he feared she was hurt.

They found Pinkeyes sitting by the roadside, half stunned, and bleeding from a wound on her head, where she had fallen on a sharp stone.

Lifting her gently into the cart, and telling Pink-eyes to rest her head on Brownny's shoulder, neighbor Fox led the mule and his sorry load home.



DONKEY DAN'S SUCCESSOR.

When the surgeon had come and sewed up the wound on Pinkeyes's head, he told the family the injury was serious, but, with quiet and good nursing, he hoped she would be out in a week or two.

Brownny was somewhat bruised by his rough-and-tumble dragging over the stony road, but the shame of it all, and his anxiety about Pinkeyes, made this seem a small matter.

For the sake of having his own heedless way, he had nearly killed his sister, grieved the whole family, and disgraced himself and Donkey Dan.

Brownny had been in little troubles before, from the same cause, but had never harmed any one but himself, except that he hurt the feelings of those who loved him, and were sorry to see him growing up so willful and reckless, in spite of all they could do or say.

Deacon Bunny had a long and earnest talk with him, and ended by telling him that he might go into the sick-room every morning and evening and look at his sister's pale face and bandaged head, with the sad mother watching by the bedside, if he felt that he needed any punishment to help him keep the lesson in mind.

Pinkeyes soon was well enough to sit up, and there never was a more devoted and loving brother than Brownny tried to be, through all the days and weeks before she was able to play again.

Cousin Jack pitied Brownny, for he could see how keenly he suffered, and when he found a good opportunity he spoke with him about the accident.

He said he was glad Brownny had the nerve to hang on to the mule as he did, or some little child might have been run over, if they had reached the public highway, as would have happened before neighbor Fox could have stopped them, but for the check of Brownny's weight on the mule's speed.

Cousin Jack tried to explain to him that willfulness, or mulishness, might be pardonable in a mule, who had only instinct to guide him, but good sense ought to teach any one who had reason and a conscience, the difference between manly firmness and mulish obstinacy.

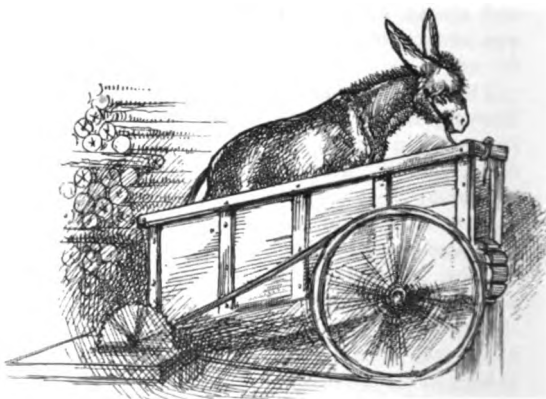
"Mix a little more caution with your strong will, and season it with kindness and forbearance," said Cousin Jack, "and you can change your fault into the kind of virtue which rules the world."

Donkey Dan and Gaffer soon had another fracas at the barn, and Mother Bunny begged the Deacon to sell the mule and buy a pet more tractable for family driving; and this was decided to be wise.

A few days later the Deacon bought the Bunnies a handsome, chubby, well-broken Shetland pony.

He told the family that a man who owned a saw-mill, run by horse-power, had taken Donkey Dan, and he would have no backing to do there, for the great flat wheel he walked on to drive the mill, only went one way, around and around, always in the same direction, with no opportunity for an argument that even a mule could enjoy.

Brownny did n't change his nature all at once, but



DONKEY DAN IS PUT INTO A PLACE WHERE HE MUST GO, WILLING OR UNWILLING.

he did try to be a little less like a mule, in some ways, and whenever he was inclined to be headstrong, or heedless, Cousin Jack would stily say, "I wonder what 's become of Donkey Dan?"